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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5348  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY PRIORITY 9710  
RUEHAA/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 1496  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4864  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 3885  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1024  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1781  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 6540  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 9779  
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 2207  
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 3666  
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0717  
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 8942  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1523  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 022251

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/30/2016

TAGS: AF PK PREL NATO

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER DENIES PREDICTING NATO FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. KABUL 05625

¶B. CROCKER-NORLAND EMAIL 29 NOV 2006  
¶C. GRENCIK-NORLAND EMAIL 29 NOV 2006

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) Following a November 29 press account (reftel) that described Pakistani Foreign Minister Khushid Kasuri as privately telling visiting foreign ministers of NATO member states that the Taliban is winning in Afghanistan and advising NATO members from sending in more troops, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a November 30 press statement categorically denying that the Minister had ever conveyed such a message. The MFA statement, reproduced in full below, said that the Minister has consistently presented Pakistan's long-held position that a comprehensive strategy -- military, economic and political -- is necessary to resolve Afghanistan's problems. According to MFA (Americas) Director General Sohail Mahmood, in addition to the MFA statement, Pakistan's High Commissioner in London has written to the editors of the "Daily Telegraph" challenging the accuracy of press report. The MFA Spokesperson also responded strongly to a statement by the Afghan Foreign Ministry that Pakistan has told NATO officials that the Taliban should be included in a new government, denying that statement and rejecting the Afghan Ministry's claim that Pakistan is interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs.

¶2. (SBU) In a November 29 conversation with the Ambassador, FM Kasuri was equally forceful, saying that he has never described ISAF as a failed mission, discouraged NATO members from giving their full support to ISAF or implied that the Government of Pakistan (GOP) was seeking a new government coalition in Kabul that would exclude President Karzai. To the contrary, Kasuri said, the GOP supports President Karzai and the elected government of Afghanistan as the only legitimate government of Afghanistan; building a stable and secure Afghanistan, he concluded, can only serve the national interest of Pakistan.

¶3. (SBU) During a November 30 meeting, Foreign Secretary Riaz Khan also told the Ambassador that the "Daily Telegraph" report was dead wrong with regard to the remarks attributed to the Foreign Minister. As to comments the "Daily Telegraph" attributed to the Governor of North West Frontier Province suggesting that Britain's long history of military encounters in Afghanistan should have led it to think twice before assuming command of the ISAF mission, ForSec Khan suggested that Governor Orakzai was responding in kind to public complaints by Afghan and NATO member state officials that Pakistan is not doing enough to stop the Taliban insurgency. (Note: Orakzai's comments, reflecting a negative assessment of developments in Aghanistan, were widely reported in the local press November 25-26. End note.) Khan concluded by quoting President Musharraf's observation to UK PM Blair that Afghanistan's problems will be solved in Afghanistan, not in Pakistan.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador took the opportunity presented by the ForSec's clarification to underscore the importance of GWOT partners not succumbing to the blame game. Noting that he had called upon Governor Orakzai in Peshawar the day before, the Ambassador said that he had told the Governor that the USG has its own concerns and frustrations over the implementation of the North Waziristan agreement, but that we convey our views directly and quietly, without going to the press. We would appreciate the same consideration from our Pakistani partners, the Ambassador concluded, noting in closing that the only party to benefit from this public sniping is our common enemy. The ForSec agreed that the U.S. has been circumspect in sharing its concerns to the GOP, but that the same could not be said of officials of other NATO/ISAF member states.

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¶5. (C) Comment: Post has contacted other NATO member missions who have hosted high-level visits to Islamabad in the past month (e.g., UK, the Netherlands, Hungary); all confirmed that FM Kasuri had not/not said anything approaching the remarks attributed to him in the "Daily Telegraph" article. Despite this universal confirmation by diplomats who have recently met the Foreign Minister that remarks such as these are simply not in Kasuri's repertoire, post has been dismayed to find colleagues from NATO member missions who accepted the accuracy of the reporting without question. To some extent, this is due to the popularity and prestige of the reporter -- Ahmed Rashid, a well-respected chronicler of the Afghan wars and a vocal critic of President Musharraf -- within Islamabad's diplomatic community. This is not the first time that Post has noted inaccuracies in Rashid's reporting; it is deeply unfortunate the this latest report has frayed the incipient bonds of trust between Islamabad and Kabul.

¶6. (U) November 30 MFA press statement:

(Begin text) The Daily Times of 30 November 2005 has quoted some remarks attributed to the Foreign Minister by the Daily Telegraph. The Foreign MInister's comments have been distorted and misrepresented. The Foreign Minister did not say that the Taliban were winning the war in Afghanistan and NATO was bound to fail nor has he advised any country against sending more troops. The Foreign Minister had only reiterated what Pakistan has been stressing all along - the need for a comprehensive strategy. The Foreign Minister had emphasized that military approach alone would not resolve the problem in Afghanistan. It must be combined with political and ecomic approach. The international community must encourage national reconciliation and undertake an extensive reconstruction programme for South and Southeast Afghanistan in addition to what it is being done for the rest of Afghanistan and address the problem of narcotics.

CROCKER